

WAPA celebrates
anniversary

Power Forward
2030 preview

CVP reducing
rates

Get to know
the CPAO

• CLOSED • Circuit

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

DECEMBER 2022



**Reflecting
on 45 years**



CLOSED Circuit

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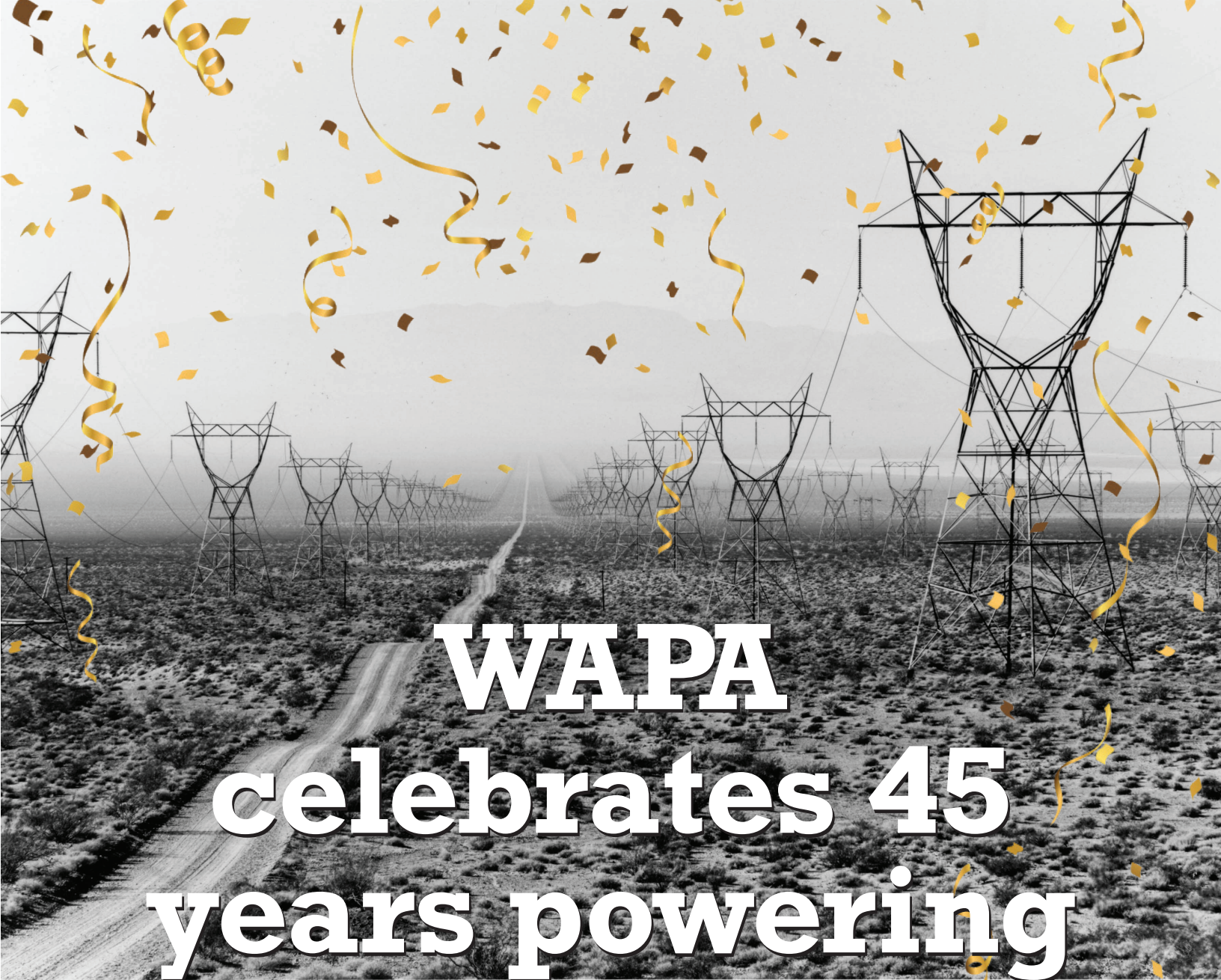
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On the cover

High Voltage Electrician **Brian Marsteller** captured this transmission tower and sunrise reflection the morning of Sept. 23, 2022, near Tracy, CA..





WAPA celebrates 45 years powering the West

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his month, WAPA celebrates 45 years as a power marketing administration, safely providing reliable, cost-based hydropower and transmission to our customers and the communities we serve.

continued on Page 2

It has been an incredible journey for the organization and the people closely intertwined with its legacy and success, both employees and customers alike. WAPA as well as the Department of Energy was established amid the 1970s energy crisis, and today we find ourselves in a modern age of electrification that is unlike anything we have seen since electricity was first introduced in American homes in the late 1800s.

Through the eyes of employees and the customers, WAPA has through the decades delivered on its mission of marketing federal hydropower and operating critical transmission systems throughout the West. All the while, WAPA has capably managed through periods of drought and hydrological surplus, endured increasingly extreme storms and wildfires, answered countless calls for mutual aid, joined organized markets, defended against rising cybersecurity threats, and constructed and rebuilt segments of the transmission system now integral to energy delivery across our footprint. We have and continue to play a meaningful and significant role in our evolving industry and in our nation's fast-moving energy landscape.

Yet for all the change we have witnessed, what is truly remarkable is what remains essentially the same. Our mission.

The complexities we face as an industry continue to grow but our mission serves as a steadfast beacon. It is a beacon for focus in a storm. And it is a beacon to professionals who could work for any organization but are drawn to work with purpose.

From our power marketing professionals who sell the hydropower, to our natural resources leaders who protect the environmental and cultural resources in our territory, to the dispatchers directing energy in our balancing authorities, to the craft maintaining our extensive transmission system and to all those other critical functions that empower our mission success. Every single one of us brings a vital piece to this complex machine, and it is through our collective efforts and those of past employees that we rise to every challenge, face every uncertainty and serve our customers with exemplary service, innovativeness and resolve.

I find it especially poignant that we have a new strategic plan to herald our 45th year. For what are anniversaries but times for recommitment, affirmation of partnerships and a commemoration of all we have accomplished in the past. I look forward to leaning into our shared ideals and goals in WAPA's *Power Forward 2030* strategic plan to further inspire us.

Thank you for all you do, and all you will continue to do, in support of WAPA and the important purpose it serves to our customers and our nation.

Happy 45th anniversary, WAPA. □



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large 'T' and 'L' followed by a long horizontal line.

Administrator and CEO
Tracey LeBeau



VISION



MISSION

Developing Power Forward 2030

WAPA recently completed formulating its *Power Forward 2030* strategy

and is preparing the final strategic plan for publication. *Power Forward 2030* is the successor to *Strategic Roadmap 2024* and is intended to guide WAPA's direction through an evolving energy landscape for the next seven years.

The final strategy represents the culmination of months of leadership collaboration and employee, customer and stakeholder engagement.

"Done correctly, strategic planning is a collaborative process to confirm who we are, why we exist and why it matters," said Chief Strategy Officer **Kerry Whitford**.

The strategic planning process helps set the course for WAPA's future.

What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. It helps the organization answer who we are, why we exist and why it matters.

"Through the creation of vision, mission and goals, strategic planning provides direction to our ultimate destination in 2030 and communicates how we're going to get there, helping WAPA prepare and address issues with a more long-term view," she said.

The strategic planning process is complex, far-reaching and challenging. Whitford worked with the senior leadership team to ensure alignment around strategies to meet the

mission and to improve value-added benefits to WAPA customers, employees and key stakeholders.

“The strategic planning process requires considerable thought and planning on the part of the SLT,” Whitford said.

Ultimately, leadership sets the organizational vision and establishes the strategic goals and objectives.

“The seniors didn’t always agree but engaged in thoughtful conversation on WAPA’s purpose, role and value provided. These productive deliberations resulted in senior alignment around the strategy and a better plan,” Whitford said.

The SLT met Feb. 23-24 to begin working on WAPA’s strategy in earnest. Throughout March and April, they enlisted the help of councils and functional area representatives to provide feedback on early drafts and ensure that everyone’s voices and needs were heard.

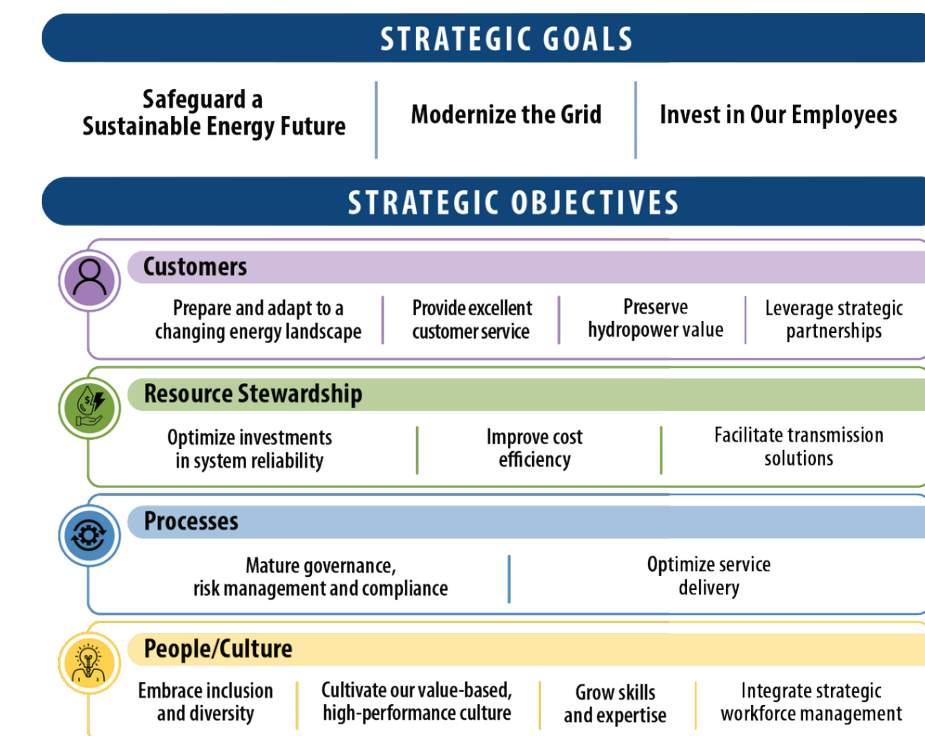
They met again in April to address feedback they had received to make the plan more innovative, prioritize infrastructure reliability, better address external challenges such as drought and seize opportunities to maintain a strong and engaged workforce. The SLT, working with the Strategy Office, made many changes as a result.

“As the administrator stated at a previous all-employee meeting, senior leaders took the necessary time to do our due diligence to clarify where we want WAPA to be in 2030 and how to get there,” Whitford said.

The extended leadership team also played a significant role in strategy formulation. In September 2022, they met to review strategic objectives and recommend initiatives to put goals into action.

“We spent two full days with the XLT brainstorming strategic initiatives. This is a crucial part of strategy formulation as strategic initiatives are the actions, initiatives, projects and programs we implement to achieve the goals and objectives,” Whitford said. “It’s where the rubber meets the road. The importance of this step was palpable through the high energy in the room.”

Over the past two years, WAPA sought feedback from employees, customers and stakeholders at each major milestone of strategy formulation. This



process injected industry and organizational knowledge, identified areas for collaboration, tested proposed goals and objectives and encouraged buy-in for successful execution.

Back in late 2020, Strategy staff worked with employees and stakeholders to clarify and refresh WAPA’s mission and vision statements through a series of focus groups. Participants confirmed the mission, but WAPA revised the vision to focus on “Empowering communities, securing a resilient energy future.”

In late 2021, Strategy further engaged employees, customers and stakeholders in a comprehensive and collaborative environmental scan through surveys and brainstorming sessions to conduct a SWOT analysis that identified internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

This year, the organization also sought feedback on its role in the industry and met with stakeholders, including Department of Energy, Bureau of Reclamation, American Public Power Association, Colorado River Energy Distributors Association and Mid-West Electric Consumers Association, among others.

Most recently, WAPA’s “Let’s Talk Strategy” sessions and survey introduced and sought input on proposed strategic goals and objectives from employees, customers and stakeholders.

Overall, feedback trended positive with 70-80 percent of participants reporting a favorable first impression of the new strategic goals and objectives. Results of the sessions validated the direction and identified opportunities to clarify and streamline objectives.

Senior leaders carefully considered and integrated the feedback.

“The participation and input proved invaluable, resulting in a plan that we believe resonates with our internal and external stakeholders and increases energy and excitement around WAPA’s value-added services and role in the industry,” Whitford observed.

Power Forward 2030 is expected to be published in January 2023. □

For a summary of the approved *Power Forward 2030* strategic goals, objectives and initiatives, as well engagement results, please visit the *Power Forward 2030* page on [myWAPA](#).



Sierra Nevada reduces CVP power bills

By Lisa Meiman

Sierra Nevada is reducing customer bills by \$8-10 million annually starting in 2023, thanks to a large reduction in interest expense.

This shows the New Melones Dam under construction as part of the Central Valley Project in October 1977. The powerhouse fill culvert was installed below the dam by the Corps of Engineers. Pacific Gas and Electric's old powerhouse is shown on the right. Courtesy of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.





In 1977, the New Melones powerhouse was being constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The butterfly valve chambers are shown on the left with the PC&I outlet works in the foreground. Courtesy of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.



Concrete was about to be placed in the FC&I outlet area during construction of the New Melones Project on the Stanislaus River in California. The fixed-cone valves were later attached to the flange at the bottom of the picture. Courtesy of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

“This helps us keep costs down for the Power Revenue Requirement. Costs keep rising on everything, but by making this happen, we’ve been able to extend the estimates of the PRR without a rate increase for customers,” said former Senior Vice President and Sierra Nevada Regional Manager Sonja Anderson.

The interest reduction allowed for the Central Valley Project’s original capital investment to be repaid eight years ahead of schedule. With the CVP facilities fully repaid, customers will see lower rates almost immediately.

“This is great news for customers. We’re beginning a rate case, and we’re in a great place with the PRR at only \$68 million, which is the lowest it has been since 2007,” said SN’s Rates Manager **Autumn Wolfe**. “With a lower PRR, our customers owe less. They are only paying for annual aid to irrigation until 2030.”

The reduced power bills are a result of the Bureau of Reclamation completing the CVP Final Cost Allocation study, which identified that power customers had been overallocated their share of CVP repayment obligation by about \$32 million since 1944.

Power customers and some other project beneficiaries are responsible for repaying the original capital investment to construct the dams and hydroelectric facilities to the U.S. Treasury, plus interest, by a certain timeframe. WAPA’s at-cost rates reflect those cost obligations for power customers.

For CVP, power and water supply users are responsible for reimbursing Treasury by 2030 for the original capital investment costs while power and a subset of water users are responsible for paying the accompanying interest. Power’s repayment responsibilities are captured in the PRR.

Because customers had overpaid on their allocation of capital costs, SN needed to adjust the interest owed by power customers as they had been paying interest on amounts they did not owe over the life of the project. The adjustment reduced the interest expense by \$158.8 million. Both the \$32 million overpayment and reduced interest expense were used to pay off the original investment in the project early.

“From my perspective, it was a matter of doing what was right. Those were costs the customers shouldn’t be paying,” Anderson said. “There were almost three years of partnering and working with Reclamation and educating Reclamation and WAPA staff, confirming our authorities and working with General Counsel and Headquarters Finance to ensure we were doing what was in the best interest of our customers.”

The reduced PRR improves the value, affordability and competitiveness of CVP’s hydropower product, which has struggled through three exceptionally dry years and is forecasted to endure a fourth next year.

According to unaudited figures in WAPA’s monthly Hydropower Conditions report, CVP generated 774,446 megawatt-hours from Oct. 1, 2021, through Aug. 30 this year, or about 25.5% of average.

SN markets hydropower to customers using a Base Resource that gives each customer a percentage of total hydropower output from the project. Customers are on the hook for costs regardless of how much their CVP percentage amounts to in megawatt-hours each year.

In wet water years, customers can receive a lot of hydropower under their Base Resource. In dry water years, hydropower deliveries are reduced or may not occur at all.

“We had very little Base Resource this year. Customers pay whether they get hydropower or not, and then they must pay for supplemental power in the market,” Wolfe said. “When we have a lower PRR, we are doing the best we can to keep our costs low. There is not much we can do about hydrology and generation. We do recognize that we are all in this drought situation together.”

Anderson added, “Our customers can leave SN and our contracts and take the option to purchase power in the open market so it’s critical for us to keep our costs down so that WAPA is the provider of choice, especially in this drought.” □

Note: The author was a public affairs specialist.

Day in the Life: Trust your camo and journeymen

By Paul Davis



A bucket lift extends over the conservator on a transformer in Big Substation, South Dakota, where high-voltage electricians prepare to perform maintenance.

M

any WAPA employees are outdoor enthusiasts: hikers, fishermen, hunters and photographers. Following our outdoor interests, many of us use camouflaged clothing to blend in with our surroundings as we approach a game bird, fish or other wildlife. We trust the camo to (hopefully) help us remain unseen to our target.



Historical WAPA photo of Maintenance workers harnessed up and working on the transmission system near Glendive, Montana.

Thousands of hours of research and development have gone into the camo patterns we wear today. High-quality materials stop wind and rain yet barely make a sound.

Similarly, the journeyman technician at WAPA has been trained and developed over the span of years. We invest thousands of dollars in each of these employees' skills development, and we trust and depend on them to perform under pressure and in extreme conditions.

The apprentice's way

It normally starts with an apprenticeship, a four-year program focused on education in a particular craft. Later, the successful apprentice will continue to acquire skills on the job to keep up with the ever-increasing journeyman requirements.

We execute the four-year apprentice program under the watchful eye of a full and successful journeyman on the crew. Both a foreman and manager typically work together to appoint the full journeyman who oversees the new apprentice.

This mentor plays an important role in training an apprentice, not only in the skills of high-voltage maintenance, but also in attitude and service-mindedness. After four years in the program, we hold a graduation ceremony to recognize the successful progression from apprentice to full journeyman.

All four crafts – linemen, electricians, meter and relay, and communications – use the apprentice program to acquire, develop and maintain a consistently trained and qualified workforce. Additionally, WAPA's two-year Craftsman-in-Training program enables journeymen in one craft to gain formal training in a different craft, allowing the workforce to expand its skills and knowledge.

Growing on the job

After acquiring the skills of their craft, the new journeyman begins actual training on the live power system. The journeyman will now be able to make power system decisions, such as taking on the roles of clearance holder, clearance requestor or acting foreman. They can take "callouts" to maintenance jobs in the field and report back to the foreman with accurate data.

WAPA's skilled journeymen make up the backbone of our workforce. As a transmission power provider, WAPA relies on them to maintain the power system. Whether identifying an issue or executing scheduled maintenance, journeymen request a clearance, general, hotline order or authorization to work, and they set to work maintaining and improving our system.

Knowing which of those methods to use and how to acquire it is a special skill. For example, if the job required it, a journeyman electrician could request a clearance to protect themselves and

other employees while working in a substation on a circuit breaker.

Formal documentation ensures that journeymen and dispatchers follow the switching steps exactly in sequence, which deenergizes the section of the substation without dropping power to customers.

Lingo lesson: Typical maintenance requests

- **Clearance** – provides protection against energization from sources of primary system energy. A clearance protects employees.
- **General** – switching used for sectionalizing lines or rearranging system equipment. General switching does not provide protection.
- **Hotline order** – used to request work on equipment that remains energized and, if a fault occurs, prevents the circuit from reenergizing during the work.
- **Authorization to work** – provides information to the system operator regarding all work performed on power system equipment.



A crew installed equipment this fall at Big Substation in South Dakota, which included using a crane and manlifts to service this live tank circuit breaker.

A seasoned journeyman knows very well the importance of the clearance. The clearance stands between them and an energized power system. Without a clearance, a journeyman can't hang personal protective grounds, and without grounds crews can't safely work on the power system.

A typical journeyman's day

Take a lineman, for example. On any given day, a journeyman in this craft will show up at the shop at 6:30 a.m., get their working assignment for the day from the foreman, then load their work truck with the necessary supplies and head down the road to the job site. Whether working alone, such as line patrol, or as a crew member working under a clearance, their day will be spent out in the power system.

Their crew might replace a crossarm, broken insulator, frayed conductor or even a pole. The crew may need several pieces of heavy equipment, so they drive the needed equipment down the right of way to access the structure under repair.

Once onsite or at the office, the foreman will lead a tailgate meeting covering the job parameters, review and answer questions about the job hazard analysis, discuss the expected dangers on their particular job, assign tasks and decide who will switch at each location.

Depending on the job, the crew may need clearance to protect those

on the power system. The foreman will request a clearance and assign the switchmen. They drive to the switch location, contact dispatch, read back the switching steps and wait for direction to switch. When the system is switched and ready for a clearance, the job supervisor will receive the clearance.

Once the dispatcher issues the clearance and points of protection are identified and discussed with everyone working inside the bounds of the clearance, the linemen will verify that the line is deenergized, then hang their protective grounds and begin the work.

The foreman directs journeymen to carry out the necessary repairs following the safety guidelines they know by heart and shielded by their personal protective equipment. They often rely on complex rigging or bucket trucks to reach broken or aging equipment.

When they've completed the repair, the crew drops the grounds and releases the clearance, in that order. Finally, they clean up the area and drive on to the next job, or they head back to the shop by 5 p.m.

Building bridges across functions

WAPA's craftsmen are the employees who touch the transmission system; all crafts work together harmoniously so they can achieve WAPA's mission. Without the journeyman workforce, WAPA cannot safely provide reliable, cost-based hydro-

power and transmission to customers and the communities they serve.

The next time you see a WAPA technician, take a minute and get to know them, introduce yourself and explain your job. It will be surprising to each of you how important your jobs are to completing the mission. Administrative employees play equally important roles as field technicians when it comes to "Serving like your lights depend on it."

Open communication and mutual respect will only improve our work environment and make us all better at our jobs. While much remains to be done, let's continue to improve the workplace culture and strive to build the WAPA community within and beyond the job site. Be a positive representative for WAPA and help others on their journey as well.

Trust in the field

You can't get a good closeup picture of a whitetail deer in its natural environment if it knows you're there. We trust our camo to accomplish this task.

Likewise, trust and rely on the journeymen to get their jobs done, rainstorm or sunshine, 24/7/365. Their teamwork, camaraderie and safety culture build bonds of trust with each other and the wider workforce. We thank them for their dedicated service and for coming back safely from each job well done. □

Note: The author is a foreman II electrician.

Positive leadership encourages a culture of trust

By Aidan Wiese



W

hen it comes to establishing work culture, like with many things, one of the most important and easily achievable strategies is being the change you want to see in the workplace.

Four WAPA employees took this to heart when they selected an offering from the Leadership Development Program in July 2021 as part of the Senior Leadership Development Program. The applicants selected *The Positive Leader: Deep Change and Organizational Transformation* program offered by the University of Michigan Ross School of Business.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the course also met an essential criterion that WAPA's Leadership Development Program was looking for: it was entirely virtual.

Though the program usually spans one week as a daily in-person experience, the evolving COVID situation changed this round's offering instead to be a 10-week virtual program that met once a week for four hours.

Several participants partially credited the pandemic situation as a motivating factor for their selection of this program.

"When it was offered during the peak madness of the pandemic, there wasn't a lot of information out there, and I felt like this was what was needed at the time," said Director of Transmission & Construction **Marc Kress**. "I really enjoyed the format they offered as a result of the pandemic, and I hope they offer it like this again in the future."

During the sessions, participants were assigned an exercise for the following week and would come back and share their results in breakout groups. They shared things that worked or didn't work with each other, teaching what they had learned in order to retain it better.

One such exercise focused on developing strong relationships and the importance of those in completing objectives.

"My biggest takeaway was the importance of establishing high-quality connections with family, friends and employees," said Vice President of Information Technology – Infrastructure **Greg Hansen**. "High quality connections lead to trust and trust leads to improved performance."

The training revealed that not only do relationship building and positive leadership approaches benefit the individual employee, but they also help the organization as a whole.

"There's data to support that positive leadership and culture can increase productivity, profits and morale," Kress noted.

"I've seen the benefits of positive leadership at WAPA, and it was nice to see a program that defined that better and helped you see what positive leadership can do for your work relationships when it comes to getting stuff done," said Vice President of Project and Asset Services **Chris Lyles**.

Additionally, the program provided attendees with practical tools to better harness the skills of diverse team members.

"They also taught you to be better at soliciting help from people. They talk about how and why it's good to ask for help and to crowdsource and use people around you to help solve problems rather than trying to take it all on yourself, which is what I tend to do," Lyles said.

As another homework assignment, participants were asked to write and send out a reflection on their "best self" to up to 20 people at work or in their personal lives. They then asked those individuals to give feedback on when they had seen those employees at their best.

"All the feedback I received was about being kind, empathetic – nothing about the technical things I knew," Lyles said. "People emphasized that they really appreciated the emotional intelligence that I bring to the table and see other attributes in how I lead as more valuable than the technical expertise that I often think is valuable."

Similar to the Strength Finders leadership tools familiar to many at WAPA, the Ross School of Business program gets people to buy into their own positive attributes.

"I like to think about what I can do, not what I can't do. Otherwise, it's burned out, wasted energy you don't need," said Vice President of Reliability and Compliance **Brent Sessions**. "You may as well focus on what you *can* do and what is in your ability to do."

The training reinforced that positive thinking about oneself and others, as well as small actions taken to assist teammates, brings positive results.

"The number one thing they teach you in leadership class is that being

a leader is not about you. It's about inspiring the people around you to be their best. It's about being authentic," Sessions said. "If I can help people solve their problems or avoid their mistakes, all the better."

"It was eye-opening and humbling to hear that people recognize the things you did," shared Kress. "Sometimes those things you do for others in your everyday go unnoticed, and it was really eye-opening to me as a manager to realize that the people I work with need to hear that too."

The group, which included executives from corporate America, was also asked to design their own experiments. Sessions assigned himself to make two people laugh each day.

"Laughing has direct positive physical benefits. Humor doesn't mean I don't take the job seriously," Sessions said. "It's because I take the job so seriously that I use humor, and my employees perform better because of it."

The training also gave the WAPA participants new ways of looking at time management, including an analogy about filling a jar with rocks, pebbles and sand.

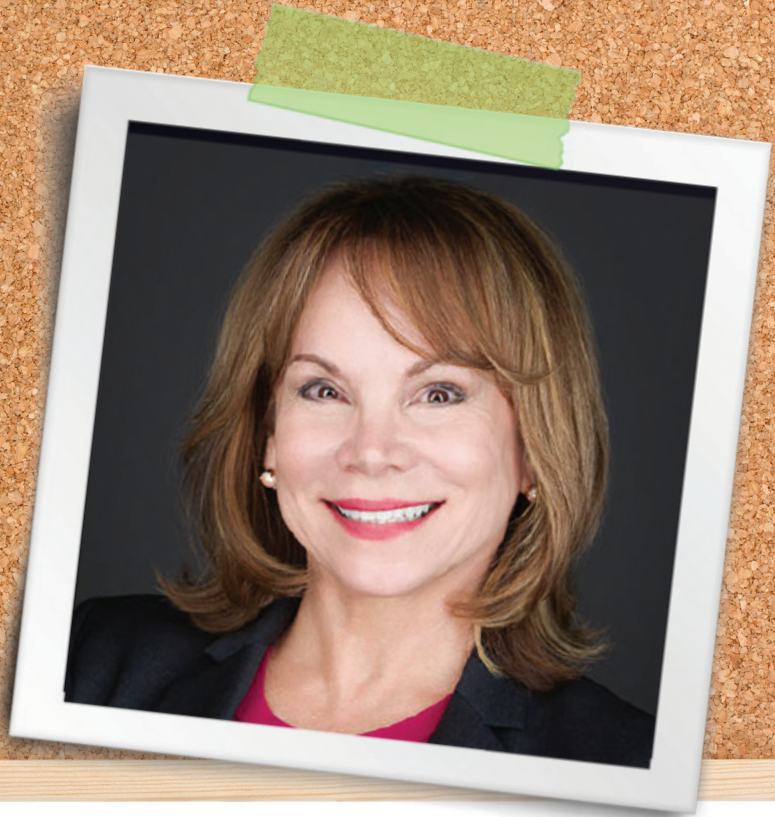
"The jar represents your day, and the rocks, pebbles and sand represent the activities you perform to fill your day," Hansen said. "If you start your day with 'sand' activities, such as worrying about emails, you may not have time for 'big rock' activities, such as projects and strategic thinking."

WAPA's Leadership Development Program launched the SLDP again this year and sponsored the course in its traditional in-person capacity from Oct. 2-7, 2022. The SLDP program will run again in this fiscal year, with more information to come.

"I've found all the classes they've selected to be very beneficial. We need to make sure our culture is maintained or enhanced, especially with all the changes our organization has faced," Sessions said. "I've taken several leadership classes, and this is one of the best I've ever taken." □

Note: The author is a secretary who works under the Miracorp contract.

Get to know the WAPA Chief Public Affairs Officer



Teresa Waugh was named the WAPA chief public affairs officer in July 2015. In her role, Waugh advises on communicating policies, initiatives and decisions throughout the organization and monitors sentiments and perceptions of all stakeholders. *Closed Circuit* sat down with Waugh to get to know her better.

What brought you to WAPA initially?

A diverse background and one incredible opportunity. An advantage of my field is an abundance of career options. My path includes public relations, broadcasting, marketing and managing a facility while working for institutions of the Fortune 500 sort and a large municipal government. In 2011, I was delighted to have a role in a new industry with a meaningful purpose at our sister organization Bonneville Power Administration.

I first met WAPA staff when they benchmarked communications for the tactical action plan. Reciprocally, I learned about the organization's vast footprint, complex operation and focus on leadership. I met WAPA employees for lunch each time I was in Colorado visiting family.

In 2015, I was invited to WAPA to serve as acting chief public affairs officer and ex-officio member of the senior leadership team. Six months later, I was selected for the permanent position. I am honored to have served in this role for seven years now.

“With a top strength in connecting the dots, I have found that once a basic understanding of the why is achieved, it’s easy to communicate in a way that translates, informs, persuades, influences, motivates and sticks.”

What do most people not know about you?

Most people don’t know that I am insatiably adventurous. Most notably, I ventured to the South Pole in 1998. On New Year’s Eve 1999, I managed Y2K risk for satellites while in McMurdo, Antarctica.

I have an unusual level of tenacity and grit, or so I am told, which seems to surprise people. The adage “don’t judge a book by its cover” applies to me. I am driven by a core set of principles and values, one of which is standing up and advocating for the underserved and overlooked.

Most people don’t know that I raised two children on my own, working hard to build a career while ensuring that they became well-equipped to tackle the world. Today, both are happily married parents and good people.

What are your communication and leadership styles?

My default leadership style is a combination of servant and transformational with a preference to adapt to the situation or person.

I strive for an assertive communication style, with a focus on change principles when needed. I believe understanding “the why” is key to corresponding effectively. With a top strength in connecting the dots, I have found that once a basic understanding of the why is achieved, it’s easy to communicate in a way that translates, informs, persuades, influences, motivates and sticks.

What has been your most rewarding experience at WAPA so far?

Hands down, it is leading my team. Leading people is the most rewarding experience of my career. Next is serving as an ex-officio member of the senior leadership team, which is an incredible opportunity to contribute to shaping the organization.

Other rewarding contributions at WAPA include sponsoring and leading the refresh of our organizational core values in 2017 and creating an Integrated Communications Group in 2019. Most recently, ICG implemented an Open Mic program offering anyone at WAPA an opportunity to teach and learn about the organization.

What are you reading right now? Do you have a favorite author?

Right now, I am reading *Civility Rules! Creating a Purposeful Practice of Civility*. Incivility is incredibly contagious; therefore, I seek the antidote to adopt and cascade.

Each week I read an average of three books. A few that have had a lasting impact recently are *Systems Inspired Leadership: How to Tap Collective Wisdom to Navigate Change, Enhance Agility, and Foster Collaboration* by Frank Uit de Weerd and Marita Fridjhon; *The Practice of Groundedness: A Transformative Path to Success That Feeds – Not Crushes – Your Soul* by Brad Stulberg; and *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results* by James Clear.

Sometimes I dive into fiction when an escape is welcome.

Would you tell us about your coworkers at home?

My company at home is a giant fig tree named Romeo due to his large, heart-shaped leaves.

Last summer I downsized to a charming place near the nature conservancy on the South Platte River. My coworkers include an array of wildlife, steps from my patio. Most days begin with a brisk walk through the Enchanted Forest – yes, that’s its real name – where I mindfully chart a direction for the day ahead. □

45th Anniversary Photo Contest winners unveiled

By Teresa Waugh



W

APA turned 45 on Dec. 21, operating today in a very different environment than when it was created as part of the new U.S. Department of Energy.

In the 1970s, an era of watershed environmental and energy laws emerged to protect natural resources and conserve energy. Price hikes, fuels shortages and long lines at gas stations inspired a movement toward energy reform.

In 1977, Congress founded WAPA as part of DOE. Its mission: Safely provide reliable, cost-based hydropower and transmission to our customers and the communities we serve.

Over the next 45 years, WAPA would succeed in that mission, build innovative ways of doing business, streamline operations and take the lead in technologies that improve system reliability.

Today, WAPA continues in that tradition. Yet, it faces compounding challenges such as historic drought, extreme temperatures, climate change, a global pandemic, supply chain issues, and cyber and physical security threats. All the while, WAPA, and the grid, must adapt to rapidly increasing energy demand.

What remains steadfast is our mission. WAPA delivers affordable and reliable electricity to our customers, many of which are in rural, underserved areas that rely on low-cost hydropower to energize their communities.

Now, as in the years before us, WAPA remains dedicated to working together with our customers, stakeholders and peers to find solutions to these demanding conditions. WAPA and our partners look ahead with vigor and with hope. Together, we can do great things.

Photo contest

As part of its 45th anniversary, WAPA held an employee photo contest. The theme of the 45th anniversary photo competition was the annual theme: Reflect, Recharge, Resolve.

WAPA's story, as told through the words and photos of employees, brings the 45th anniversary celebration to life. Beginning next month, the top 20 photos will be featured on WAPA social media channels, and the top 10 selected winners are being recognized in a WAPA-wide employee meeting and featured here.

Closed Circuit and the Office of Public Affairs appreciates your participation in making this year's contest a success. Thank you for telling WAPA's powerful story. □

Note: The author is WAPA's chief public affairs officer.



1

High Voltage Electrician *Brian Marsteller* captured this transmission tower and sunrise reflection the morning of Sept. 23, 2022, near Tracy, California.



2

Civil Engineer *Charles Garcia* took this photo while standing at the top of a new 300-foot guyed communication tower, which he designed.



3

"These drifts don't melt!" Project Manager *Shawn Berkram* commented on his image of the Parker-Blythe #2 line situated above the shifting sands of the Rice Valley Dunes of Southeastern California. The U.S. Army spent time training under General Patton here prior to Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa during World War II. Hence, construction of the line in the 1960s included the U.S. Army sweeping the right-of-way for "munition remnants." Once or twice a year, the line requires a DSW Maintenance team to maintain access as well as the "phase-to-dune" clearance for the safety of recreationalists, he added.



4

In late September 2022, Facilities Operations Specialist *Jon Solum* caught this idyllic scene near the Watertown Control Center in Watertown, South Dakota. As he aptly put it: "Colorful. Rural. Corn. Wide open spaces."



5

Taken by Substation Electrician *Brett Cordsen*, this image shows fog rolling into Glen Canyon as seen from Glen Canyon Substation when his crew was re-gasketing a transformer in the substation. Page, Arizona is in the background.



6
 High Voltage Electrician *Chris Bruce* took this amazing sunrise shot on a “perfect, cool fall morning” near the 345-kilovolt transmission line structures at Ault Substation.



7
 Desktop Support Specialist *David Darmody* snapped this image of a transmission structure near Bismarck, North Dakota, in September.



10
 This photo by High Voltage Electrician Leader Foreman II *Tony Lucero* shows DSW electricians removing head on a live tank 345-kilovolt circuit breaker in preparation for a rebuild of the breaker.



8
 This picture, captured by Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic *Rick Peterson*, shows craftsmen installing a new Nokia microwave link at the Glen Canyon Microwave Communications Site.



9
 GIS Analyst *Ryan Riley* took this image while out with Vegetation and Maintenance Fleet Program Manager *Danny Borunda* to review and map vegetation work done along the Ault - Craig and Terry Ranch Road - North Park transmission line corridor.



In July, WAPA leaders from across the organizational footprint gathered for the first major in-person and hybrid event since the pandemic began.

Leadership Summit 2022 connects team leads, supervisors

This year's Leadership Summit planners didn't know for sure whether their event would come to fruition for months leading up to the event. Everchanging local COVID data and federal travel and meeting requirements created significant uncertainty right up until early July.

"It was touch and go on whether we were going to be able to hold the summit due to COVID. But it happened! And by all accounts it was a productive and successful week of leadership training," said Leadership Development Program Manager **Troy Steadman**.

"I'm proud of the decisions leadership made to move forward, for the team that ran the event and for the attendees for lending us their valuable time," he added.

On July 18-22, WAPA leaders from across the organizational footprint gathered for the first major in-person and hybrid event since the pandemic began. With about 260 leaders in attendance in total, WAPA hosted the meeting at the Embassy Suites conference center in downtown Denver, Colorado.

Sponsored and organized by WAPA's Leadership Development Program, the biennial training brought together WAPA's team leads, supervisors and managers from across the organization for leadership training and networking built around

the theme of “Daring Leadership, Powering Forward.”

A cross-functional, volunteer committee from a wide range of program offices provided planning and logistical support before, during and after the Summit.

The programming centered around Brene Brown’s “Dare to Lead” training. Participants divided between two tracks. One came for the first half of the week and the other for the latter half. Both tracks attended intensive training sessions delivered by professional facilitators.

The inspirational content was geared toward “Brave Leadership,” which aims to develop brave leaders and courageous culture. The themes explored in the sessions included choosing courage over comfort, staying curious and asking the right questions, learning to “rumble with vulnerability,” living by core values, braving to trust others and learning to rise.

As in past years, the event was centered around the All-Leadership Meeting, or ALM, held on Wednesday, which was attended by all participants. After a safety message delivered by Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer **Jennifer Rodgers**, Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** kicked off the day with a “fireside chat” style discussion with Steadman.

“We had wide consensus across the organization, top to bottom, side to side, to invest in and commit to leadership development at all levels. That was the right thing to do and another way we’re ahead of the curve,” LeBeau said during the discussion.

Among other topics, LeBeau touched on how leaders actively make other leaders, concrete ways to stay engaged at work and the importance of WAPA’s safety culture.

“We have a safety culture at our core. We need to continue to build on that in a more holistic way,” she said. “What we’re doing this week can be an incredibly important foundation to how we approach the safety culture tenets we believe in and have committed to as an organization.”

After LeBeau’s discussion, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm delivered a recorded video message to the audience.

“Many people take it for granted that the lights will come on at the flip of a switch, but I know that you’re the ones making sure that happens for 40 million Americans across the West,” Granholm said. “And I know just how important your work is.”

Following the video address, keynote speaker Keith Bailey spoke on the theme of motivational leadership. He discussed the power of storytelling in helping organizations and leaders connect with their customers and audiences.

After Bailey’s talk, Leadership Development Program Manager **Brittanie Paquette** recognized the graduates from the Senior Leadership Development Program.

The SLDP graduates honored included: **Jon Aust**, operations manager; **Greg Hansen**, vice president of information technology – infrastructure; **Pete Heiman**, vice president of transmission services; **Marc Kress**, director of transmission and construction; **Chris Lyles**, vice president of project and asset services; **Kevin Schulz**, vice president of IT – cyber security and chief information security officer; and **Brent Sessions**, vice president of reliability compliance.

Next came a customer panel moderated by then-acting Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer **Tina Ko**.

The panel featured Tom Davis, general manager of the Yuma County Water Users’ Association; Alice Jackson, senior VP of system strategy and chief planning officer at Xcel Energy; Elda de la Pena, chief administrative officer at Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association; and Pi-Ta Pitt, tribal utility general manager at Pechanga Western Electric.

After lunch, Summit attendees welcomed the final speaker, Harvard University’s Leonard Marcus, for an inspiring training on “meta-leadership,” emotional intelligence and how crisis forges powerful bonds of leadership, even across organizations.

His neuroscience-informed approach explores how leaders overcome difficult situations by learning how to recover quickly from real or perceived threats. Marcus calls this “getting out of the basement.”

In his analogy, when the human brain perceives a threat, its emotional

and physiological reaction tends to override rational thinking, sending us to the basement, where critical thinking and problem-solving skills are limited.

Great leaders can identify when they are in the basement – whether due to a major crisis, organizational challenge or interpersonal conflict – and can quickly use the tools to get themselves and others out of the basement. Then they take the actions needed to reach rational solutions.

The All-Leadership Meeting punctuated a productive week that for many felt more like a reunion than a meeting.

“The Leadership Summit was a pivotal moment for leaders to gather after an unprecedented two years,” said Leadership Development Program Manager **Brittanie Paquette**. “It was a breath of fresh air to be able to meet and learn together in person.” □

Access more LDP resources:
[myWAPA->Programs->Leadership Development->Leadership Resources](#)



Members of the Leadership Summit Planning Committee:

- Melissa Ardis
- Kayti Bashore
- Jackie Brusoe
- Tomas Espinosa
- Charles Montañez
- Brittanie Paquette
- Troy Steadman
- Melissa Wiseman
- Eric Barendsen
- Sharon Brown
- Jacob Dubbs-Stubblefield
- David Gorlin
- Lisa O’Brien
- Sean Salomonson
- Jermaine Villareal
- Tatiana Young



Holiday food safety: Clean, separate, cook, chill

By Paul Robbins

With all the parties, shared meals and social gatherings during the holiday season, foodborne illness, also known as food poisoning, is a common hazard.

An estimated 48 million cases of food poisoning occur each year in the U.S.; that's almost one-in-seven people annually.

Illness can strike within 20 minutes of eating bacteria-contaminated food or between one to three days, sometimes more. Symptoms include abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea in addition to flu-like symptoms such as headache, fever and body aches.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration suggests four basic food safety practices to protect against foodborne illness: clean, separate, cook and chill.



SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURES as measured with a food thermometer

Food Type	Internal Temperature
Beef, Pork, Veal, and Lamb (chops, roasts, steaks)	145°F with a 3-minute rest time
Ground Meat	160°F
Ham, uncooked (fresh or smoked)	145°F with a 3-minute rest time
Ham, fully cooked (to reheat)	140°F
Poultry (ground, parts, whole, and stuffing)	165°F
Eggs	Cook until yolk & white are firm
Egg Dishes	160°F
Fin Fish	145°F or flesh is opaque & separates easily with fork
Shrimp, Lobster, and Crabs	Flesh pearly & opaque
Clams, Oysters, and Mussels	Shells open during cooking
Scallops	Flesh is milky white or opaque and firm
Leftovers and Casseroles	165°F

August 2017

FDA U.S. FOOD & DRUG
ADMINISTRATION

Clean

Cleanliness in the kitchen is key. This includes hand washing and keeping dishes, utensils, cutting boards and countertops clean before and after use. Rinse vegetables and fruit under running tap water and wash firm produce with a cleaning brush. Avoid rinsing poultry and meat before cooking, as this increases the possibility of bacteria spreading to the sink, countertops and other foods.



Separate

Whether it's the shopping cart, grocery bag, refrigerator or cutting board, separate meat, seafood, poultry and eggs from other foods. It's easy to get distracted in a busy kitchen. Be careful not to put cooked food on plates that once held raw meat, poultry, eggs or seafood, and never reuse a marinade on raw food unless you boil it first.



Cook

Judging whether food is cooked based on texture and color is not a reliable way of knowing if it is ready to eat. A food thermometer is the most dependable and safest choice for gauging minimum internal temperature of meat, seafood, poultry and egg products during all cooking methods.

Only use recipes that call for eggs to be cooked thoroughly. When using a microwave, cover the food and stir occasionally, and rotate the dish by hand once or twice if the oven does not have a turntable. Afterwards, allow food standing time as this completes the cooking process, then check it with your food thermometer. Always bring soups, gravy and sauces to a boil when reheating.



Chill

Promptly refrigerate foods and check the appliance's internal temperature using a thermometer.

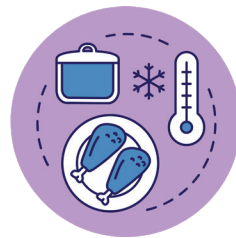
Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees or below and the freezer should be at zero or below. Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods within two hours after cooking.

Defrosting uncooked food at room temperature is not safe. The three safest ways to defrost food are in the refrigerator, cold water and a microwave oven. When using the microwave or cold water, food should be cooked immediately after thawing.

If you marinate food, keep it in the refrigerator and when storing leftovers, divide large amounts in shallow containers that will allow for quicker cooling.

Remember these four steps of food preparation. After all, the holidays are for celebrating, not sickness. □

Note: The author is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.



For more information, visit:
[www.fda.gov/consumers/
consumer-updates/food-safety-
tips-healthy-holidays#](http://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/food-safety-tips-healthy-holidays#)



Study results released for possible RTO membership

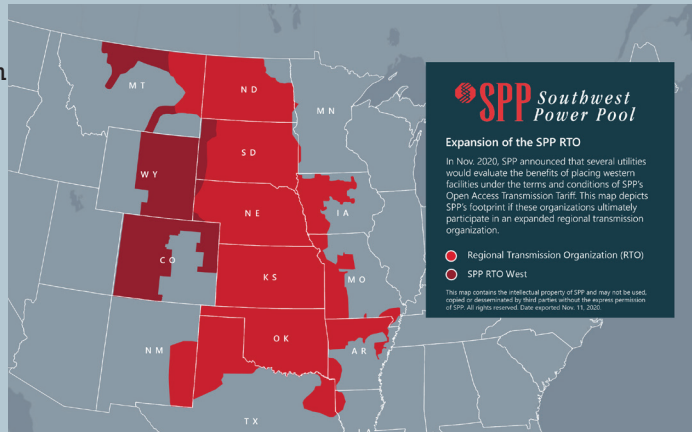
On Sept. 21, the 2022 Brattle study results were released, providing potential market benefits if the Southwest Power Pool Regional Transmission Organization were to expand into the Western Interconnection.

The study estimates adjusted production cost savings of \$71 million per year under average hydrology conditions. The savings increase to \$89 million per year under severe drought conditions.

Upper Great Plains, Rocky Mountain and the Colorado River Storage Project participated in the study along with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Colorado Springs Utilities, Deseret Power Electric Cooperative, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association and the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska.

"This study, including the specific impacts across WAPA customers, will help inform our next steps and potential future as we adapt to the changing climate and generation mix. We greatly appreciate the effort dedicated to this study from Brattle and other study participants," said Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau**. "As always, we are committed to collaborating with our customers and stakeholders as we assess this opportunity. Any decision to move forward with final negotiations for SPP RTO membership will be consistent with our statutory requirements and involve the appropriate public processes."

Employees are currently evaluating the study results and discussing them with customers, stakeholders and others. If the results, as well as other factors, support moving forward with a recommendation to pursue final negotiations to expand our participation in the SPP RTO, WAPA will initiate a public process in the *Federal Register*.



Engaging leadership on display

Engaging leadership and conflict management: These were the two themes that dominated the Leadership Learning Intensive, or L2I week in Folsom, California, Oct. 24-28. The week started with facilitated training on what engaging leadership means and how emotional intelligence, conflict management and relationship management play into this concept. The L2I participants learned from each other, practiced new skills and leveraged their relationships with each other to solve current problems they were facing.

During the week, the cohort visited the Elverta Substation for a "day in the field." Participants heard from the Environmental team, the union representative and several craft personnel. As part of this field trip, the group enjoyed a substation tour with a few "extras." These included witnessing a drone in action and watching journeymen climb a lattice structure. It culminated with a ride up in the Bronto, a lift that went up 196 feet in the air.

The week ended with a panel discussion by the Sierra Nevada leadership team. The panel talked with the L2I participants about their leadership journey and shared words of wisdom with the group. Hosted by SN, the theme of engaging leadership was not only taught to the participants formally, but it was also on display the entire week.



L2I Participants

- Krystall Valencia
- LaTisha Saare
- Kim Bentley
- Nicole Gonsalves
- Melissa Ardis
- Justin Spear
- Chris Magee
- Brittanie Paquette and Troy Steadman (program managers)

Brief Transmissions

Leave restoration requests due Jan. 9

As the end of the calendar year approaches, remember that federal employees cannot accumulate more than 240 hours of annual leave. Annual leave in excess of 240 hours, which was scheduled and approved by the supervisor in writing on or before Nov. 19, but not used by the end of the leave year (Dec. 31) may be restored for future use under certain limited conditions.



Contact your Human Resources Business Partner to learn how to request leave restoration.



Crews power through winter temps

The North Dakota Department of Transportation recently granted Upper Great Plains permission to temporarily reroute the Forman-Edgely transmission line through part of a road easement. Crews completed the work through frigid temperatures, and at one point had to call off the work due to high winds and blizzard conditions.

Despite the early December cold, South Dakota line crews also replaced insulators and worn parts on the Watertown-to-Huron lines. Just another example of WAPA's dedicated employees going the extra line mile.



Happy winter holidays!

The *Closed Circuit* team wishes you and yours a happy and safe winter holiday season. We appreciate your readership and your support in making our magazine the best it can be, and we look forward to bringing you more engaging content next year.



Closed Circuit wants you

The 2023 *Closed Circuit* publication calendar is now available. Copy deadlines are always the 15th of the month before the next month's issue. Please make a note of them so that you can ensure your news and announcements make it into the appropriate issue. As always, *Closed Circuit* encourages participation from all levels across WAPA. If you are interested in writing for the magazine, pitching story ideas or providing other content, get in touch with us at publicaffairs@wapa.gov.

Closed Circuit is looking forward to having you!

Issue	Copy due	Published
February	Jan. 15	Feb. 15
April	March 15	April 15
June	May 15	June 15
August	July 15	Aug. 15
October	Sept. 15	Oct. 15
December	Nov. 15	Dec. 15